

**Remarks by Ambassador William H. Moser at reception to honor press freedom**  
*(May 28, 2013)*

Good evening and welcome to my home.

I am sure some of you are wondering why you were invited here tonight and the answer is very simple: we in the United States believe that the press is one of the most important non-governmental institutions that exists in democratic societies.

The United States is an advocate for a free and unfettered press around the world. What you journalists do is vital to a healthy democracy. Your investigations, your questions, and ultimately your stories inform and educate the public; they provide a check on power and even more importantly the abuse of power, and they give voice to the voiceless. Media that are independent from the state and from undue political influence allow the peaceful expression and exchange of ideas, on which democracy depends.

I always tell people that in our Constitution, the press is the only private business specifically mentioned. It is protected by the First Amendment in our Bill of Rights, which states that the government "shall make no law infringing on the freedom of the press." Back when our Constitution was written more than 200 years ago, there were no state media. The press was a private, commercial business. The media in the United States experience very little governmental interference, and you can truly hear all kinds of ideas and opinions being expressed. We believe this is an important part of the fundamental right to freedom of expression.

But this right to the freedom of expression encompasses more than just the right to speak, it also encompasses the right to hear. Former slave and abolitionist Frederick Douglass said, "To suppress free speech is a double wrong. It violates the rights of the hearer as well as those of the speaker."

All of you, whether your role is reporting, editing, photographing, blogging, regulating, or advocating, are guardians of these precious rights to speak and to hear and you have a great responsibility to the Moldovan public. We encourage you to speak truth to power. You should challenge your leaders, and ask hard questions even to people like me, ambassadors and members of the international community.

We see a promising media environment here and a vibrant discussion going on in Moldova's press. I am always proud to tell people that despite the difficult political situation here, Moldovans are able to freely express their opinions and you can hear and read diverse points of view in the press. At the same time, I would be remiss if I didn't mention some concerning signs

we see. First, there is a lack of transparency in ownership of some media outlets. One of my favorite sayings in Russian is: "Кто платит тот заказывает музыку." In order to have a truly free and flourishing press, the public must know who is paying for the views being expressed. Additionally, there is the suppression of some viewpoints. We have put out statements, and I have commented on it numerous times, but we are concerned about the process by which the NIT case was handled.

I know that many of you here tonight are competitors, and we think that competition is a healthy part of any market. At the same time, I encourage you to work together and support each other to ensure that the fundamental freedoms of expression and press are protected and strengthened in Moldova.

Thank you for being here tonight and I look forward to speaking with you.

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